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ABSTRACT

This book is about conflict between Protestants and Catholics over Indian mission schools in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the late 19th century, American Indian policy was dominated by Protestant humanitarian organizations that sought to Americanize the Indians in terms of the evangelical Protestant heritage from which the reformers came. The system of Catholic mission schools on Indian reservations was seen as a major obstacle to the development of a universal Indian school system maintained by the federal government. The Protestants, finding that the Protestant outlook that permeated government schools fulfilled their own goals, had largely abandoned their mission schools, while the Catholics looked upon government schools as institutions that would pervert the faith and morals of Indian children. The book begins in 1888, when it first became clear that Catholic Indian schools were the principal beneficiaries of federal funds for mission schools, and ends in 1912, with the last great Protestant-Catholic flare-up over Indian schools. Between those dates, Catholics fought for the right of Catholic Indian parents to send their children to Catholic schools, for the restoration of rations to Indian children in mission schools, for the use of Indian trust and treaty funds as mission school support, for Catholic religious instruction in government schools, and for the right of nuns to wear their religious habit when teaching. Principal actors in these struggles were the Bureau of Indian Catholic Missions, the Indian Rights Association (a Protestant organization), federal agencies and officials, and the federal courts. Appendices include a Sioux petition for a Catholic contract school, a mission school contract, and general regulations for religious worship and instruction in government Indian schools. Contains references, notes, a bibliography, photographs, and an index. (SV)

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